

A. Honorary Diploma, Brother Eugenio Eyraud High School, Rapa Nui (2008); PhD in archaeology, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (2006); MA in anthropology, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (2002); BA in mathematics, Claremont McKenna College, California (2000).

Q. Place and date of birth?

A. Boston, Massachusetts. April 29, 1977.

* See the statues at <www.terevaka.net/dc/databases/shepardson_2009/moai_pt1.html>.

Photo by Brett Shepardson.

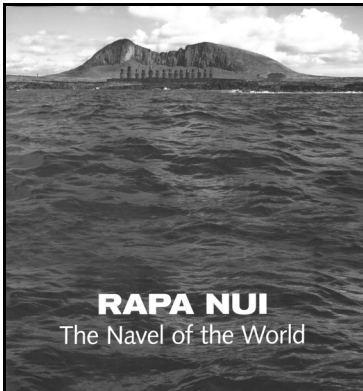
REVIEWS

RAPA NUI: THE NAVEL OF THE WORLD **José Miguel Ramírez**

Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino
/ Banco Santander, 2008

soft cover; 120 pages (ISBN 978-956-243-057-9)
\$40+\$16 s&h (tienda@museoprecolombino.cl, Santiago)

Review by Shawn McLaughlin



As I've written elsewhere, there are three types of works on the subject of Easter Island — scholarly publications sometimes difficult to digest by the lay public; publications that ought to be classified as fiction even though they technically meet the non-fiction criteria for bookstores and libraries; and non-fiction publications (some by

eminent archaeologists and other specialists in their fields) with a bent towards the average reading public — which includes coffee-table books full of beautiful pictures. Examples in the latter category include *Easter Island* by Michael Kenna; *Rapa Nui, 110 Años* by Giovanni Carella Allaria; *Easter Island* by Carlos Mordo; *Tepito O Te Henua* by Luis Poirot; *L'Ile de Paques* by Joël Cuénot; *Rapa Nui* by Jacek Herman-Izycki; *Osterinsel* by Horst Gattermann; *Isla de Pascua / Easter Island* by Felipe Soza Larraín. The latest addition to this large-format category, at 11.5" × 11.5" (29.21 cm × 29.21 cm) in size, comes from a name that should be familiar to all Rapanuiphiles — José-Miguel Ramírez. And both a beautiful and resourceful addition to every Easter Island bookshelf it is! Starting with a stunning cover photograph of Ahu Tongariki viewed from the sea, through 120 pages of text, photos, and illustrations, *Rapa Nui: The Navel of the World* is the English language companion to Ramírez's *Rapa Nui: El*

Ombligo del Mundo, which was also published last year. Dedicated to Gonzalo Figueroa and Papa Kiko, who died in 2008 and 2009, respectively, *Rapa Nui* easily appeals to neophytes as well as experts with chapter headers that include "The Roots of Rapanui Culture"; "The Mystery, Miracle, Magic, and Science"; "The Megalithic Splendor"; "The Fall of the Moai" and "History: The End of Isolation". Although there is a heavy reliance on references to island legends (which of course must be taken with a grain of sea salt), the content is solidly grounded in the latest scientific findings about the island and each chapter section features pictures of modern islanders — often children — providing a humanistic and contemporary context to the sequence.

The English translation by Peter W. Kendall stands out for its clarity, accuracy, and style, just as the beautiful photos by Nicolás Aguayo Fuenzalida and never-before published illustrations by Alfredo Cea transform the informational value of the book into an artistic, decorative possession. Among too many pictures and drawings to mention, there is a comprehensive map with 70 toponymic points identified, a robust, two-page spread of Easter Island fishes, no shortage of crisp images of wood and stone artefacts, and, to be expected, a decent assortment of the usual, familiar reproductions of engravings.

In a book that clearly celebrates the Rapanui re-creating themselves after centuries of rise and fall and resurrection, Ramírez has managed to blend together (in both the Spanish language edition as well as this edition) the visual beauty of Easter Island *and* the latest research interpretations while avoiding sensationalism or undue controversy, covering such topics as ancient geology; seafaring and navigation; the Taiwanese origin of early Oceanic explorers; DNA analysis; Lapita people; *marae* from regions elsewhere in Polynesia; linguistics; rock art; detailed discussions of astronomical orientation of some Easter Island *ahu*; the Birdman competition; explorers such as Routledge and Heyerdahl; causes of the island's decline (which is discussed with appropriate balance); and the end of isolation. The book is rounded out by the inclusion of a glossary and references.

In the book's closing words, Ramírez concludes, "Undoubtedly, the explanation for the Rapanui enigma lies not in reason, but rather in spirit — in that which the ancestors called *mana*". Yet, were it not for *reason* this book would not exist, so I think it's fair to say both forces contribute to the *mana* in this worthy new addition to the Rapanuiphile's bookshelf.